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Correspondence.

FLORENCE, March 12, 1855.

MESSRS. CRAYON:—Since my first letter, I have accidentally met with three numbers of your paper. It has a business-like air that pleases me, but I can reconcile my mind to its title no better than at first. THE CRAYON is too inseparably associated with old and worn-out ways of Art to be even mentioned in this our day. It has done mischief enough in the modern schools of Europe. However well it might have been in the early days of the revival of Art to make beginnings, and seek for excellence therein by progressive steps, when the thing was once done—where can be the use of trying to do it over again? It is as great an absurdity, as that of a man, with a long journey before him, returning every night to the place he first started from in the morning. We shall get along, if we persist in such folly, about as well. Let us have, therefore, no more meddling with chalks and crayons, learning to draw, and all that sort of thing, fit only for the diversion of boarding-school young ladies, and the encouragement of drawing-masters.

That this has been the egregious error of the old world, needs no argument to prove. We, as high-spirited Americans, should show ourselves above all such small business, and discard all subjection to old and absurd notions. The genius of our land is too independent and vigorous in itself to bear the restraint of any kind of leading strings. He is a young Hercules by his birthright—has come into the world firm on his feet, with the best foot foremost, and ready for anything—able to pitch into any quantity of snakes that may come in his way; and as to robbing golden apple orchards, and such like exploits, let him alone for it.

Rely upon it, young America is going to do that which all the world beside have not yet had the courage to attempt—with all the academies and learned professors, the countless monuments it possesses, and the princely patronage that has been wasted: he will be the first to lift the mantles of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and the rest of them, from their very tombs—fling them, one after another, over his shoulders, in a way that Young America only knows how to do, and fill the seedy old world with admiration and amazement at a dash.

He can do it, and he will, with only some few of the best specimens of the old masters to give the impulse. Only show him what has been done—that will be enough; my life for it, he does it again at the first look, and at the next will beat it out of sight. This chance I am determined he shall have.

But, for pity's sake, Messrs. CRAYON, do not be casting seeds of mischief by talking about crayons, and such like nursery stuff—only fit for the swaddled infancy of the old world. Deep metaphysical discussions of abstruse problems in Art, do well enough. By entangling the brain in raveling out such mysteries, if there is the most hidden germ of originality in its nature, it is thus most certainly developed. Theorists, who fly high and never touch the dull earth, or its possibilities, are the

safest leaders for true genius; while such dull and prosy hand-mill grinders of practical dogmas, as I am sorry to see gaining place in your columns, have no other tendency than to depress and restrain its impulses. Shame that it is so, and, worse than all, that they make a business of it. Beware of them.

The only thing to be commended in these old fellows, is the hard-headedness with which they persist in their errors. They know better, but, holding like very devils to their sins, would have all sinners like themselves. Why, there is Cornelius, the veteran German artist—the great German artist, as some pretend to call him—now in Rome, who has been, for more than a year, drawing away on paper in a way I should be ashamed to hear of any American boy being caught at: Overbeck does nothing else, for the best reason in the world, he don't know how to do anything, but with his pitiful bit of charcoal.

Some of these seedy old drones are just now affecting great admiration over some outlines and sketches by one late Mr. Allston, whom nobody, that I know of, ever heard of in America—that have found their way here. Some of the heavy-headed German and Italian professors pretend to see in them something quite equal to anything that has been done in their way, by anybody, in times past or present. All stuff and affectation. The vignettes on our bank notes, and even the heading of my card, when I was in business, are worth any quantity of such mere scribbling of lines. What are our young men to come to when such things are upheld as models for emulation? And what can be expected of our country when enough money is expended in having such things engraved and published as would buy a whole gallery of the old masters, with judicious management.

Such is the excess of absurdity to which this indulgence in Art-trifling is carried in Italy, that even many of the most distinguished sculptors may be detected in the contemptible occupation of drawing, absolutely feeling their way into marble with a sixpenny lead-pencil—of them, at least, better things might reasonably be expected. If they want drawings they should get others to do them, as they do for such of the dull work of their modelling and marble-chipping, of whom the artist-manufactories of academies in Italy turn out annually any quantity, good for nothing else. They should reserve their strength for invention and general direction—like men of true genius—and nurse their powers in comfortable arm-chairs, keep their brains clear under more fanciful artist-caps, and their beard and mustachios in better trim than is possible, if their energies are allowed to be dissipated by such trifling.

The painters cannot make this sort of dodge, as they jealously affect to call it, so well. Still I am happy to find that many of them, especially among the younger and more independent spirits, are doing better than formerly. They are beginning to be more sensible of the advantages of a proper appropriation of the works of the old masters. Instead of delving in chalks and crayons, and stale bread, they are reaping vast profit from analyzing the mysteries of vehicles and varnishes, grounds and pigments, and practical cunning of the old masters, exemplified in their works; and it

is with pride I have observed that our artists have shown a degree of sagacity and acuteness at this sort of discovery far ahead of those of every other nation. They have, to my knowledge, discovered secrets that have hitherto baffled the whole world, and to them, at least, the old masters have endeavored in vain to cover up their tricks. This is the true course to follow, as we shall one day see by results. To me it is incomprehensible how any other could ever have been suggested.

I greatly fear the truth to be, that the great masters of Art, actuated by jealousies unworthy of them, have intentionally endeavored to illure young aspirants by false lights from the way of their own success. Even Raphael, unimpeached as his character may be in other respects, never let his great secret of excellence escape him. It certainly does not look well for his gratitude, to say nothing of his generosity, that, among the vast number of students and others, by whose labors he profited, not one was able to elicit this secret from him. If he had had some of our American boys to deal with, I cannot but think the case would have been different, and it would scarcely have died with him, as it did. He would not have had the chance to leave them no better off than the rest of the world in this respect, to find it out in his works. They would hardly have been blinded by his eternal answer to every question as to ways and means of excellence, "Learn to draw."

Old Michael Angelo was still worse. While he would pick up a hammer and leap at a block of marble like any demon incarnate, "making," as Vasari says, "the sparks fly under his chisel as he extracted his statues"—he would coolly look over his shoulder and give the same answer to the trembling young inquirer. And yet this sly old fellow, "some time before his death, burnt a large number of his designs, sketches, and cartoons, that none might see the labors he endured, and the trials to which he had subjected his spirit, in his resolve not to fall short of perfection."

This constant outcry about drawing by masters, both ancient and modern, is to me so strangely incomprehensible that I cannot but think it must have a meaning beyond what may appear to the uninitiated. At times I cannot help imagining that I see a sly wink passing between them, while a forlorn pigeon of a beginner is mercilessly undergoing the process of plucking under its rub-a-dub.

What can be the hidden meaning of Michael Angelo's exclamation, on seeing a picture by Titian, "What a pity these Venetians do not study drawing more!"—and then old Giorgio Vasari, that academic manikin of a toady, as if he could not resist the temptation of having his say too in the matter. "It is certainly true that whoever has not practised design extensively, and studied the best works, ancient and modern, can never attain to the perfection of adding what may be wanting to the copy which he makes from the life, giving to it that grace and completion whereby Art goes beyond the hand of Nature, which very frequently produces parts that are not beautiful." Giorgio Vasari preaching a sermon on painting to Titian from a text by Michael Angelo! Only think of it.

Titian had his secret, and kept it as securely as the rest of them. It is rather

amusing to imagine a group of these jealous old fellows losing no chance of giving it to each other under the ribs. It was always so—more even now than then. Therefore, I implore you to be cautious in admitting the profession to an influence in your columns. You never can get at the truth of their knowledge—if they have any. Depend upon it they will never let it out, if it can in any way benefit others. The only truths in relation to Art worth making known, are to be elicited from free, thinking, enterprising men, out of the profession. Doctors, lawyers, retired commercial men like myself, weavers of subtle theories, who are not afraid to handle bluelights and sky-rockets—and fling them anywhere—men who possess that right sort of analyzing genius to pick a work of Art to flinders, without the aid of knowledge how to put it together again. Men to whom it is not requisite to handle chalks or chisels, oils, varnishes or pigments, to know all about them—who can see at a glance what is good and what is objectionable in a work of Art—who can detect bad coloring and bad drawing instinctively—who know the value of the old masters, and can talk the very best practical man to be found, stone deaf and blind on the subject—these are your hopes.

To show you the keenness and depth of penetration of such men: I knew in Rome an eminent individual, from your city, who in five minutes' contemplation of the Last Judgment, in the Sistine chapel, discovered and boldly pronounced it a failure. You cannot name the artist who would have shown such aptness and courage.

This person, when he saw my Raphael, recognized its authenticity at a glance. The very tears started in his eyes in ecstasy. A glorious, congenial spirit was that man. He dined with me every day after that I was in Rome, and at my earnest solicitation has promised me, on his return to America, to deliver a series of lectures on Art. You will of course hear of him.

Do not be alarmed if you cannot succeed in commanding at once the services of such men in advancing by their pens and patronage the objects of your paper. They are proverbially unassuming and diffident, and require to be solicited and conciliated. Once gain their confidence and you are safe, they will never fail you. To do this you should be careful in committing yourselves to the profession, for we are chary of association and contest with the trade, and choose in no way to be elbowed by it. The odor of fresh paint and damp clay is detestable. We require an atmosphere of our own, and a fair field of action, where there are no hazards to run of being tripped up by maulsticks, or of broken shins over marble blocks. Lean upon us in good faith, and we will carry you through successfully; but, all others, especially of the profession, must go overboard "*aut Caesar aut nullus.*"

You need fear no risk in such a course, either to the cause of Art or to yourselves—for we can be relied upon as its most truly disinterested advocates and promoters. If sometimes we do a little in a business way of speculation upon the works of artists whom we have raised into notice, or allow them to paint our portraits, or model our busts, for nothing—it is altogether for their own benefit and encouragement. If we throw stones, now and then, at such as have climbed out of our reach and insult-

ingly look down upon us, or give a lift to others less fortunate, it is but to preserve that just level in the republic of Art, consistent with our great national doctrines of equality.

Sorry am I to confess that we are repaid for our generous exertions in behalf of Art and artists, often with the grossest ingratitude. Even in my exertions to carry out the great plan of a gallery of the old masters to this end, I often doubt if they will be received and valued as they deserve. Much, if not all, of this is to be attributed to the cunning and secret workings of the profession.

The moment these men find a clever beginner in our hands, and rising into favorable notice by our patronage, they set their traps and snares for him in every direction, never resting until he is caught. His vanity is flattered—lectures on self importance and reliance are preached at him. He is made to believe that he can do without us, and his ear is assailed with insinuations as to the integrity of our friendship and purposes. Once within their circle and he is lost to us, at least, his truest patrons. Soon he assumes the airs of the rest, and becomes, in all respects, one of them—swaggers and talks big about High Art, drawing, professional independence, and such like academic slang, equal to the noisiest among them; and even if he starves, as he most likely does—starves—game in all his errors.

The great wonder is, that the world does not see through the cunning of these masters, as they pretend to call themselves. To me, they and their motives are perfectly transparent.

Only hear one of them spouting about drawing, purity of design, and such like stuff, and take my life for it he cannot paint a ship's figure-head decently in colors, although it is all laid out for him by the carpenter's chisel.

Watch a fellow attempting to draw a hand after delivering a lecture about vehicles and oils, contrasts, harmonies and tones, ten to one that he gives it five fingers besides the thumb.

The landscape painters, who cannot draw the figure at all, are always prating about Nature in her lonely grandeur and beauty. They all glory in sunsets, because they are a proverbially lazy set of fellows, and few of them ever saw him rise. Who ever saw a sunrise painted, or one that could be told from a sunset?

Some glory in barren plains, rocks, and broom-sedge fields, holding everything like shrub or tree in utter contempt; beyond, a lightning or tempest-shivered trunk, which they dash in with a gusto and prodigality of color perfectly refreshing to grinders of the article. What very devils such fellows are for thunder storms and shipwrecks, always managing to keep the ship at a most respectable distance, or turning it bottom upwards to get clear of doing the rigging that they know nothing about—and taking care that the unfortunate sailors shall all be swallowed up in advance.

One heavy-fisted fellow, who can't do anything less than a half acre at a time, would have all the world build houses as big as churches for the especial accommodation and requirement of his monstrosities, and heaps it with abuse because it will not want his elephantine pets. To

hear him talk, you would scarcely think he would allow anything else in the world, except his pictures and himself.

Then comes the sharp little genius on tip-toe, that would have nobody see anything beyond six inches from their noses—because his own vision never reached further—of course, depreciating everything that will not pass through his sieve.

The minutiae-monger rates his scale of perfection in a capacity to count eye-lashes—another would pummel his Art into expression with licks like a big drum. One luxuriates in darkness and smudge, and calls it Rembrandtesque: another glories in chromes and a chaos of incomprehensibilities, and imagines he is doing it, à la Turner.

The sculptors are not a whit better than the painters—one goes dead against the figure, preaches modesty, and be-blankets everything into a bundle as shapeless as a week's washing—because he can't do it. Him, that can, he underrates and affects to hold in utter horror—deploring, with sanctimonious sighs, the immorality of an age that will admire the naked truth with as keen a relish as ever did our father Adam. Those who swear by plaster go to the death on the grand style, and ancient Greece—would have our forefathers of the short inexpressibles and knee-buckles, as well as the pantalooned statesmen and generals of more modern times, strip to their very birthday suits, or flourish togas, shields, and Grecian bowie-knives in a way perfectly horrible to think of. Thus they go—thus they have ever gone—pummelling each other and running into vagaries—and thus it will ever be. Then every man among them is a preacher and a lecturer about himself—Art is only the pretext. Disguise the truth as he may attempt to do, it will out. It is the little animal, himself and nothing else, that he is prancing around and showing off, eternally.

And these are the men of the trade that would be teachers and leaders of public taste, as well as directors of the rising genius of our country, if they had their way; every one of them fighting for his own leather, and depreciating the tan and texture of all others. It must not be permitted.

The direction and interests of Art must be kept in the hands of men more properly qualified for their protection and advancement, gentlemen entirely out of the profession—who have no axes of their own to grind in the business; who, if they do not proclaim this natural prerogative in words, do so by their acts.

From such, great things may be expected, and will be certainly realized, aided by the wisdom of the critics who write for the magazines and newspapers, and the counsel of experienced dealers and collectors of old pictures and marbles.

Upon such, Messrs. CRAYON, must be also your reliance—to the entire exclusion of meddling professional characters. Look, therefore, well to where your truest interests lie, and accept the assurance that one, at least, may be depended upon in

Yours, very sincerely,

T. P.*****

ROSSITER's historical pictures of "The Captive Israelites," and "The Return of the Dove to the Ark," are on exhibition at Charleston S. C.